



# NEWS RELEASE

## OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR HOWARD COUNTY

**For Immediate Release:**

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### **Jessup Woman, 20, Sentenced to Jail for 2017 Auto Manslaughter**

A 20-year-old Jessup woman was sentenced to 18 months in jail for the January 2017 collision that killed a Halethorpe man in Howard County. Natalia Diaz-Valle, of the 8300 block of Lincoln Drive, pleaded guilty to one count of negligent manslaughter by automobile on January 10, 2018 and was sentenced by Howard County Circuit Court Judge William V. Tucker this morning.

According to prosecutors, a 2007 Honda Accord, driven by Diaz-Valle, fled from a state trooper shortly before 1 a.m. on January 30, 2017 after his radar unit clocked the Honda traveling 70 mph in a 55-mph zone on eastbound Route 100 near Snowden River Parkway. During the pursuit, the Honda reached a speed of approximately 100 mph. The Honda quickly exited onto Route 103 where it failed to stop at a red traffic signal at U.S. Route 1 and crashed into a 2007 Dodge Charger as it pulled out of a nearby fast food restaurant parking lot. The driver of the Charger, Biik Chong, 26, of Halethorpe was transported to University of Maryland R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center where he was pronounced dead. Diaz-Valle's blood tested negative for both blood alcohol and drugs.

At sentencing, this morning, Assistant State's Attorney Tricia Cecil called the collision "a senseless situation." Diaz-Valle read a statement of remorse and apologized to Chong's family who were not present in the courtroom.

Judge Tucker noted that the Chong's family had expressed forgiveness but likened an automobile to a dangerous weapon and admonished Diaz-Valle. He sentenced her to 10 years, suspending all but 18 months to be served at the Howard County Detention Center. The judge also ordered her to pay a \$200 fine plus court costs and placed her on three years of supervised probation upon her release.

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